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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 004044

SIPDIS

REL GBR

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TAGS: PREL MOPS PGOV I2

SUBJECT: IRAQI NATIONAL SECURITY COMMITTEE STIFFS BRITISH
BASRAH INVESTIGATION TEAM

REF: A. BAGHDAD 3933

1B. BASRAH 112

Classified By: AMBASSADOR ZALMAY KHALILZAD FOR REASONS 1.4 (a), (b), AN
D (d).

¶1. (S//REL GBR) SUMMARY: Only two of five Iraqi members of the Iraqi Ministerial Committee for National Security (MCNS) attended a September 29 meeting called specifically to review the results of a British team's investigation of the events in Basrah on September 19, which involved the detention by Iraqi police of two British soldiers and their subsequent rescue by British forces. The results of an Iraqi investigation were supposed to be presented as well, but the Iraqi investigators also failed to show up. Only Defense Minister Dulime and National Security Advisor Rubaie appeared. Prime Minister Jaafari (who has not been seen publicly the past four days), Minister of Interior Jabr, and Minister of State for National Security Affairs al-Anzi were absent. The British team presented their findings. The Iraqis refused to indicate where they foresee the matter going from here. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (S//REL GBR) At the conclusion of the last MCNS meeting on September 25, all members agreed to convene the committee again on September 29 to be briefed on the findings of two teams, an Iraqi MOI team and a British team from London, which were conducting investigations into the events of September 19 in Basrah in which two British soldiers operating in plain clothes were involved in a shooting incident with police, detained by the police, and subsequently rescued by British troops (reflets). The British Ambassador suggested to the Iraqis at the September 25 meeting that both teams should be permitted to present their findings to the committee together and that a joint statement be issued satisfactory to both sides. The parties agreed to meet again on September 29.

¶3. (S//REL GBR) At the September 29 meeting, the Iraqi MOI team failed to appear. The only Iraqi members of the committee present were Minister of Defense Dulime and National Security Advisor Rubaie. Prime Minister Jaafari was absent. Jaafari has not been seen in public since the September 25 meeting and has canceled all appointments with Embassy officials, claiming fatigue. Also absent were Minister of Interior Jabr (who was said to have fallen suddenly "ill" about an hour before the meeting), and Minister of State for National Security Affairs al-Anzi (who was holding his own meeting in a building a few hundred yards away with two of Jabr's deputies, one of whom was supposed to be sitting in for Jabr at the MCNS). The Coalition was represented by Ambassador Khalilzad, British Ambassador Patey, and British Deputy Commanding General of MNF-I Brims. After waiting thirty minutes for the MOI Deputy Minister who never appeared, the British team made its presentation.

¶4. (S//REL GBR) The British team pointed out that they had met with the Iraqi team for over thirteen hours and had made available to the Iraqi team all the British soldiers the Iraqis had wanted to interview. The Iraqis spent five hours interviewing British personnel. Conversely, the British team was not permitted to meet with any of the Iraqis the British desired to interview. In fact, due to the Iraqi failure to make witnesses available, the team is still unable to say with certainty what happened to the Iraqi police officers allegedly shot in the opening moments of this incident. So despite an initially high degree of trust between the two teams, ultimately the British were left with many unanswered questions--chief among them "how did two British soldiers in the custody of Iraqi police end up in the hands of militiamen?" The British presentation noted the generally positive relations between MNF-I troops and the people of Basrah, as well as the high regard with which the British forces there hold many of the Iraqi police and government officials, including the judge involved in this incident. However, the British have concluded that several policemen operating from the station in question are members of the Jaysh Al-Mahdi militia and that the policemen who are not are powerless or too afraid to challenge the others.

¶5. (S//REL GBR) At the conclusion of the British presentation, National Security Advisor Rubaie asked what the

two soldiers were doing in plainclothes in the first place. He referred to them as "agents" and asked if they were "spies" sent to kill someone. Ambassador Patey corrected him by noting that the two were "British soldiers" lawfully operating in joint GOI-MNF-I support objectives, which are the same as those of the government of Iraq, namely to track and capture persons responsible for a deadly wave of improvised explosive device attacks that have killed Coalition soldiers and civilians alike. Minister of Defense Dulime sat silent except to note that he would have liked to see the Iraqi team's presentation, an observation in which Ambassador Patey readily concurred.

16. (S//REL GBR) At the end of the meeting, Ambassador Patey asked Rubaie where the Iraqi government plans to go from here with the information. He reminded Rubaie that the purpose of the meeting with the two teams was for the MCNS to view both sets of findings, arrive at a mutually satisfactory agreement about what had taken place, and issue a joint statement to ease tensions and put this event behind. Rubaie responded that nothing can be done until the Prime Minister is briefed and makes a decision. Patey expressed disappointment, noting that this had been the purpose of the meeting in the first place.

17. (S//REL GBR) COMMENT: The British were disappointed with the outcome of the meeting. They had hoped to agree with the Iraqis on a joint statement to ease tensions and move on and to share with the Prime Minister and the Minister of Interior, in particular, the evidence they have gathered that points to serious undermining of the Basrah police force by militia infiltrators. Jabr and al-Anzi clearly did not want to hear any of this. END COMMENT.
Khalilzad